



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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CANADA

# **MORE THAN A MOMENT: INVESTING IN CANADA'S ARCTIC SECURITY**

**Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and  
International Development**

**Honourable Ahmed Hussen, Chair**

**APRIL 2026  
45th PARLIAMENT, 1st SESSION**

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Chair**

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### **Reports from committees presented to the House of Commons**

Presenting a report to the House is the way a committee makes public its findings and recommendations on a particular topic. Substantive reports on a subject-matter study usually contain a synopsis of the testimony heard, the recommendations made by the committee, as well as the reasons for those recommendations.

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# **THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

has the honour to present its

## **SIXTH REPORT**

Pursuant to its mandate under Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, the committee has studied Canada's Arctic strategy and has agreed to report the following:



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## FOREWORD

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In September 2025, our Committee agreed to study *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*, which the government released in December 2024. Witness testimony welcomed the policy’s vision, which was co-developed with partners. However, our meetings also drew attention to infrastructure and capability gaps, and underscored the need to move from ideas to action. This sense of urgency, coupled with calls for greater ambition, reflects two realities. The first is about Canada, which has seen decades of underinvestment in the North even though vibrant communities are integral to Canada’s promise of nation-building and its identity as an Arctic power. The second reality is that the international security environment has deteriorated, which is affecting the strategic landscape in the Arctic, alongside climate change. Canada has no choice but to rectify the first reality and prepare itself for the second. The Arctic is not a distant corner of the world, but a region that encompasses around 40% of Canada’s landmass.

The Prime Minister’s “ambitious new plan to defend, build, and transform the North,” which was announced on 12 March 2026 and backed by more than \$35 billion in federal investments, is—therefore—a significant development.<sup>1</sup> While these commitments were made after the Committee’s study, they respond to concerns that were raised during it. Building on the report that follows, the Committee will have an important oversight role to play in ensuring that this plan delivers results that are transformational. Cooperation with allies on Arctic security will need to progress, in tangible terms, at the same time.<sup>2</sup> And the Committee will continue to rely on witnesses, who give their time and share their expertise, to help it fulfill this essential parliamentary function.

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1 Prime Minister of Canada, [\*Prime Minister Carney announces ambitious new plan to defend, build, and transform the North\*](#), News release, 12 March 2026.

2 Prime Minister of Canada, [\*Joint statement by the Prime Ministers of the Nordic countries and Canada\*](#), 15 March 2026.



## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

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*As a result of their deliberations committees may make recommendations which they include in their reports for the consideration of the House of Commons or the Government. Recommendations related to this study are listed below.*

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada continue to meaningfully involve Arctic and northern Indigenous Peoples and governments in the implementation of its Arctic foreign policy.** 12

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada continue its full engagement in the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, recognizing that this partnership and Inuit knowledge, perspectives and rights are key to Canada’s Arctic sovereignty and security, and that it consider how to further enhance the work of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee through greater alignment with the federal budgetary process and the co-development of an ambitious vision for regional development.** 12

### **Recommendation 3**

**That the Government of Canada use all tools at its disposal and work closely with Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners in the North to expand and accelerate investments in infrastructure, including for ports, transportation corridors, communications and energy systems, and critical mineral production, as well as for military facilities and logistical networks that can enhance Canada’s Arctic security.** 16

### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada accelerate the pace of its investment in the modernization of NORAD and fully fund all requirements related to Arctic security, while ensuring that it has the systems and decision-making authorities in place to enable the timely acquisition and deployment of the capabilities, technologies and infrastructure necessary for the all-domain defence of the Canadian Arctic.** 23

### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada increase the permanent presence of the Canadian Armed Forces across the Canadian Arctic and North, including the construction of new military bases, strengthening support for the Canadian Rangers, and upgrading forward operating locations to host fighter aircraft.** 23

### **Recommendation 6**

**That the Government of Canada provide funding to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to ensure it has a permanent presence in the North and can fulfill its mandate in relation to Canada’s Arctic security.** 25

### **Recommendation 7**

**That the Government of Canada deepen and formalize its mechanisms for dialogue, information-sharing and other forms of diplomatic, security and defence cooperation with its liked-minded Arctic Allies to enable coordinated responses to geopolitical shifts, climate driven challenges, and regional security concerns.** 25

### **Recommendation 8**

**That the Government of Canada position itself to play a leading multilateral role in the Arctic, including through the work of the Arctic Council and other relevant scientific, research, environmental and maritime governance bodies, and that it continue to support the representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and governments in the work of these bodies, and ensure that it has the diplomatic and scientific capacity necessary to realize this leadership objective.** 27

### **Recommendation 9**

**That, in light of the shifting geopolitical environment, the Government of Canada commit to a thorough and timely review of its Arctic foreign policy.** 29



# MORE THAN A MOMENT: INVESTING IN CANADA'S ARCTIC SECURITY

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## INTRODUCTION

When the Honourable John Main, Premier of Nunavut, appeared before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, he recognized that the Arctic was experiencing a “moment,” moving from the periphery to the centre of the international agenda. While welcoming the efforts that have been undertaken by the Government of Canada in recent years to pursue a more inclusive approach to Arctic policy, he expressed concern that this geopolitical moment will pass. When it comes to the needs of Canada’s Arctic communities, the strength of which underpins Canada’s Arctic security, Premier Main urged the Committee to take a much longer view.<sup>1</sup> As he said, “You can’t undo decades of underinvestment with a moment; you need to counter that with a sustained, well-planned-out plan to build up the north as it should be.”<sup>2</sup>

In the report that follows, the Committee intends to respect that assessment, in keeping with the comprehensive report it issued in 2019—*Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic*.<sup>3</sup> While this report is more succinct, focusing on policy implementation, it builds on that past work, reflects a commitment to non-partisan cooperation, and aims to support actions that can meet this moment and the challenges to come.

The Committee decided to undertake this study so that it could better understand the dynamic security situation in the Arctic. To orient its work, the Committee focused on the implementation of *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy*, which was published in December 2024, as well as related efforts to uphold Canada’s Arctic sovereignty.<sup>4</sup> Over six meetings held between 2 October 2025 and 12 February 2026, the Committee heard from experts, representatives of territorial governments and Inuit organizations, and Government of Canada officials. Based on its consideration of this testimony, the Committee has grouped

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1 House of Commons, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development (FAAE), *Evidence*, 29 January 2026, 1600 (the Honourable John Main, Premier of Nunavut, Government of Nunavut).

2 Ibid., 1555.

3 FAAE, *Nation-Building at Home, Vigilance Beyond: Preparing for the Coming Decades in the Arctic*, Twenty-fourth report, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, April 2019.

4 FAAE, *Minutes of Proceedings*, 23 September 2025.



its findings around the key themes that are presented below, which have guided its recommendations to the Government of Canada. The first themes are focused inward, on the steps that need to be taken within Canada to strengthen communities, unlock prosperity, and enable defence. The report then shifts its gaze outwards to the threat environment in the circumpolar Arctic and beyond, giving consideration to the capabilities and diplomatic partnerships that must be pursued in response.

## BACKGROUND

In September 2019, the Government of Canada published the *Arctic and Northern Policy Framework*. The vision it put forward was: “Strong, self-reliant people and communities working together for a vibrant, prosperous and sustainable Arctic and northern region at home and abroad, while expressing Canada’s enduring Arctic sovereignty.”<sup>5</sup> The policy framework was co-developed with more than 25 First Nations, Inuit and Métis governments and organizations, as well as with three territorial and three provincial governments.<sup>6</sup> Owing to these efforts to articulate a shared vision, which reflected work from regional roundtables, interest-based roundtables, and a public submissions process, as well as the incorporation of findings from documents such as the 2017 *Pan-Territorial Vision for Sustainable Development*, the framework’s ministerial foreword declared that it represented “a profound change of direction for the Government of Canada.”<sup>7</sup> As this Committee was told, it was the first time that Arctic policy was made with northern partners, rather than being made for the north in the south.<sup>8</sup> When the federal government determined that it needed to supplement the framework’s international chapter with a stand-alone document on foreign policy, it endeavoured to hold itself to the same standard.<sup>9</sup>

Published in December 2024, *Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy* was intended as a tailored response to a deteriorated global security environment. Its opening message from the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Mélanie Joly, was that Canada had reached “an inflection point in the Arctic.”<sup>10</sup> Canada, the minister wrote, had long sought

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5 Government of Canada, [Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework](#).

6 Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, [Highlights of Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework](#).

7 Government of Canada, [Canada’s Arctic and Northern Policy Framework](#).

8 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1115 (Robert Sinclair, Director General, Arctic, Eurasian and European Affairs, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development).

9 Ibid.

10 Government of Canada, [Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy](#), 2024, p. 2.

to manage the Arctic “cooperatively with other states as a zone of low tension that is free from military competition.”<sup>11</sup> However, the minister warned that these foundations of cooperation had been shaken by geopolitical shifts, and that “the guardrails that we have depended on to prevent and resolve conflict have weakened.”<sup>12</sup> In support of this assessment, the Arctic foreign policy highlighted five strategic challenges:

- That there could be no business as usual with Russia, which, after years of investing in and modernizing its military capabilities, launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, in direct violation of international law;
- That Russia’s behaviour had unsettled the dynamics of Arctic governance, including at the Arctic Council, which had been an effective forum for addressing matters of sustainable development and environmental protection since 1996;
- That the Arctic is strategically important for the defence of North America, which constitutes the northern and western flanks of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO);
- That, as a result of climate change, the Arctic is warming four times faster than the global average, which is causing sea ice to recede and allowing for greater maritime accessibility, while also having a significant impact on communities and the natural environment; and
- That non-Arctic states—notably China—are challenging the long-standing primacy of the Arctic states through their increased interest, aspirations, and desire for greater influence in how the Arctic is managed.<sup>13</sup>

In pursuit of a stable, prosperous and secure Arctic, the policy articulated a multifaceted approach. It involves the continued assertion of Canada’s sovereignty, the advancement of Canada’s interests through pragmatic and inclusive diplomacy, and the pursuit of leadership on Arctic governance. The policy framed the North American Arctic as a common security space and drew attention to the people-to-people connections that tie it together, aiming for deeper collaboration with the United States. The policy also

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11      *Ibid.*

12      *Ibid.*

13      *Ibid.*, pp. 7–15.



prioritized Canada’s relationships with the Nordic states, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, which are all NATO Allies.<sup>14</sup>

The Arctic foreign policy aligned with the vision that the federal government established in its defence policy update, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, which had been announced several months earlier, in April 2024. That document conveyed the Government of Canada’s assessment that the “most urgent and important task we face is asserting Canada’s sovereignty in the Arctic and northern regions, where the changing physical and geopolitical landscapes have created new threats and vulnerabilities to Canada and Canadians.”<sup>15</sup> Throughout, the defence policy expressed the intent to upgrade Canada’s contributions to continental defence, including through the modernization of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), “the world’s only binational military command.”<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, as part of the steps it is taking to increase the presence, reach, mobility, and responsiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) in the North, the government committed to collaborating with Indigenous partners and northern communities, including through the establishment of multi-purpose infrastructure.<sup>17</sup>

To ensure that Canada has the ability to detect and understand threats across all military domains, the government is investing in new capabilities. It is pursuing the acquisition of a new fleet of submarines (conventionally powered),<sup>18</sup> specialized maritime sensors, Over-the-Horizon Radar technology,<sup>19</sup> a satellite ground station in the Arctic, modern tactical helicopters, airborne early warning aircraft, and vehicles adapted to ice, snow and tundra. There will also be “northern operational support hubs” for the CAF. These hubs will consist of airstrips, logistics facilities, and stockpiles of equipment and spare parts, and are envisioned as enabling the military “to better assert Canadian sovereignty by establishing a greater year-round military presence across the Arctic.”<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, complementing its investments in NORAD modernization, the government committed to

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14 Denmark, Iceland and Norway were founding members of NATO in 1949. Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sweden and Finland moved quickly to join the Alliance. Finland acceded to NATO in 2023 and Sweden in 2024.

15 National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, 2024, p. ix.

16 Ibid., p. 6. Also see pp. 12–13 and 34–35.

17 Ibid., p. 12.

18 Public Services and Procurement Canada, *Government of Canada advances to next step in Canadian Patrol Submarine Project procurement*, News release, 26 August 2025.

19 Prime Minister of Canada, *Prime Minister Carney strengthens Canada’s security and sovereignty*, News release, 18 March 2025.

20 National Defence, *Our North, Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, 2024, p. 25.

further exploring “Canada’s integrated air and missile defence capabilities,” which could contribute to operations in various theatres.<sup>21</sup>

Investments in Canada’s Arctic security are part of Canada’s role in continental defence, but also its broader commitment to NATO requirements. At the Hague Summit in June 2025, the Allies agreed that they will each spend 5% of their annual GDP on defence by 2035, 3.5% of which is to be allocated to core military capabilities.<sup>22</sup> The remainder is to be spent on infrastructure that enables national and collective defence. To put Canada on that path, Budget 2025 announced that \$81.8 billion will be spent over five years, starting in 2025–2026, to rebuild and rearm the military.<sup>23</sup> For Canada, the Committee was told, this represents “the most comprehensive military modernization effort” since the country rearmed for the Korean War in the 1950s.<sup>24</sup>

While significant resources are being allocated to defence, Canada’s Arctic foreign policy outlined calibrated investments in Canada’s diplomatic toolkit, which are intended to solidify the external dimensions of Canada’s approach. These include structured mechanisms for dialogue and information-sharing with like-minded states on Arctic issues, support for scientific diplomacy, and the opening of new consulates in Anchorage, Alaska, and Nuuk, Greenland, as well as the appointment of an Arctic ambassador.

Witnesses who appeared before the Committee welcomed the appointment of Virginia Mearns to this position, which took effect on 15 September 2025.<sup>25</sup> She previously served in senior roles with the Government of Nunavut, the Inuit association for the Qikiqtani region of Nunavut, and Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated (NTI), the organization that represents Inuit under the 1993 Nunavut Land Claims Agreement. Ambassador Mearns will be based in Iqaluit and her role is focused on the final pillar of the Arctic foreign policy— ensuring that Canada’s “diplomatic engagement reflects the voices and perspectives of those who live in the north.”<sup>26</sup> Witnesses also supported efforts to strengthen relations with Greenland, the semi-autonomous territory that is part of the

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21 Ibid., p. x.

22 Prime Minister of Canada, [Canada joins new NATO Defence Investment Pledge](#), News release, 25 June 2025.

23 Government of Canada, [“Chapter 4: Protecting Canada’s sovereignty and security,” Budget 2025](#).

24 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1700 (David Perry, President and Chief Executive Officer, Canadian Global Affairs Institute).

25 Prime Minister of Canada, [Prime Minister Carney and Inuit leadership meet as the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee](#), News release, 24 July 2025.

26 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1535 (Virginia Mearns, Arctic Ambassador, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development).



Kingdom of Denmark, and which Premier Main called “our neighbour to the east.”<sup>27</sup> Just as the Committee was concluding its meetings in February 2026, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Anita Anand, travelled to Nuuk with the Right Honourable Mary Simon, Governor General of Canada, to officially open the consulate.<sup>28</sup>

The testimony the Committee gathered over the course of its study was generally positive as concerns the vision put forward by the Arctic foreign policy, as well as the process that led to its development. Most witnesses focused their commentary on policy implementation, which will be addressed next. That said, the Committee acknowledges the perspective articulated by Jessica Shadian, President and Chief Executive Officer of Arctic360, who argued that the policy was “a late reaction to a fundamentally changed world.”<sup>29</sup> She stressed that other states have been prioritizing the Arctic for years and urged the Committee to understand that Canada is the second-largest Arctic nation with the longest Arctic coastline, empowered by “abundant resources, robust democratic institutions and settled indigenous land claims.”<sup>30</sup> As such, in Ms. Shadian’s view, “Canada’s Arctic soft power and strategic diplomacy are indispensable.” To realize this potential, she believes that the levers of diplomacy the government has been putting in place now need to be empowered with “the mandate to carry out a serious, coherent, purposeful and strategic Arctic foreign policy.”<sup>31</sup>

## FROM POLICY DEVELOPMENT TO POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

### Committing to Co-Development as an Ongoing Process

As the basis of everything that follows in this report, the Committee recognizes the fundamental points that were made by Natan Obed, President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), the national organization that represents Inuit in Canada. He reminded the Committee that “Inuit are the foremost experts on the Arctic, and Canada would not be an Arctic state without [them].”<sup>32</sup> The Inuit homeland, Inuit Nunangat, which encompasses all of Nunavut, the Inuvialuit Settlement Region (in the Northwest Territories), Nunatsiavut (in Labrador) and Nunavik (in Quebec), accounts for approximately 40% of Canada’s entire land mass and 72% of its coastline. As Mr. Obed

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27 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 January 2026, 1535 (the Honourable John Main).

28 Global Affairs Canada, [Minister Anand to travel to Denmark and Greenland](#), News release, 4 February 2026.

29 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1530 (Jessica M. Shadian, President and Chief Executive Officer, Arctic360).

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.

32 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1615 (Natan Obed, President, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami).

noted, this area is either co-managed or owned outright by Inuit.<sup>33</sup> The same point was made by the interim president of the Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada),<sup>34</sup> Herb Nakimayak, who emphasized that “Canada’s Arctic sovereignty depends on Inuit use and occupancy across our lands, sea ice, airspace and waters.”<sup>35</sup>

The Government of Canada’s Arctic foreign policy, Mr. Nakimayak said, “must be implemented with regular and ongoing engagement with Inuit.”<sup>36</sup> In his view, this work is most effectively done through the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee, a bilateral forum that was established in 2017 to advance shared priorities,<sup>37</sup> and with the regional Inuit treaty organizations. The ITK also wants to see continued engagement through the Inuit–Crown Partnership Committee. Mr. Obed noted that this forum is “unique to Canada among the Arctic states and facilitates substantive co-operation between indigenous people and the state, which is unparalleled in the Arctic and internationally.”<sup>38</sup> He also pointed to ways in which the forum’s effectiveness could be improved, including by better aligning its work plans and outputs with the federal budgetary cycle.<sup>39</sup> More generally, the ITK also wants to see Inuit-specific federal investments that flow directly to rights holders.<sup>40</sup>

The goal informing these recommendations is for Canada to “fulfill its potential as a powerful Arctic state internationally by recognizing the region’s enormous growth opportunities and making the investments needed to bring it into the rest of the country.”<sup>41</sup> During his October 2025 testimony, however, Mr. Obed said that Canada’s approach to the Arctic has been driven by “piecemeal investments that respond to the

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33 Ibid.

34 The [Inuit Circumpolar Council \(ICC\) Canada](#) “is a non-profit organization led by a board of directors comprising the elected leaders of the four land-claims settlement regions: Inuvialuit, Nunatsiavut, Nunavik, and Nunavut.” ICC (Canada) [aims](#) to represent “the interests of Canadian Inuit through their national organization (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami), and through their settlement claim organizations, on matters of an international nature.” Internationally, including through permanent participation in the Arctic Council, the ICC [represents](#) approximately 180,000 Inuit across Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka, which is in Russia.

35 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1535 (Herb Nakimayak, President, Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada)).

36 Ibid.

37 For additional information, see, for example, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, [Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee Leaders Meet to Advance Shared Priorities Towards a More Prosperous Inuit Nunangat](#), News release, 8 November 2024.

38 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1615 (Natan Obed).

39 Ibid., [1705](#).

40 Ibid., [1615](#) and [1700](#).

41 Ibid., [1615](#).



political priorities of the moment rather than the types of investments that have transformed other regions of the Arctic into prosperous regions with high standards of living.”<sup>42</sup> What is needed, according to Mr. Obed, is “a broader vision for bringing Inuit Nunangat into the rest of the country.”<sup>43</sup>

### **Recommendation 1**

**That the Government of Canada continue to meaningfully involve Arctic and northern Indigenous Peoples and governments in the implementation of its Arctic foreign policy.**

### **Recommendation 2**

**That the Government of Canada continue its full engagement in the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee, recognizing that this partnership and Inuit knowledge, perspectives and rights are key to Canada’s Arctic sovereignty and security, and that it consider how to further enhance the work of the Inuit-Crown Partnership Committee through greater alignment with the federal budgetary process and the co-development of an ambitious vision for regional development.**

In addition to the principle of co-development, and its manifestation through inclusive diplomacy, the Committee also takes very seriously the need to learn from the past. Premier Main reminded the Committee of problematic chapters of Canadian history when the Government of Canada sought to bolster sovereignty claims,<sup>44</sup> including through the High Arctic relocation in the 1950s that saw families moved thousands of kilometres from Inukjuak, Nunavik, and Pond Inlet, Nunavut, to Resolute Bay and Grise Fiord.<sup>45</sup> He referred to the “legacy of the Cold War” and the Distant Early Warning Line sites, which, he said, “still have a footprint” in some communities.<sup>46</sup> These more than 60 installations, Natan Obed recalled, were built by the American military during the Second World War and the Cold War “without a single consideration for Inuit interests.”<sup>47</sup> To avoid any repetition, Premier Main believes that Canada’s approach to Arctic security needs to be accompanied by investments that are aimed at improving the quality of life for the people of Nunavut

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42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 January 2026, 1645 (the Honourable John Main).

45 Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, *An Inuit Vision for Arctic Sovereignty, Security and Defence*, June 2025, p. 4.

46 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 January 2026, 1535 (the Honourable John Main).

47 FAAE, *Evidence*, 9 October 2025, 1700 (Natan Obed).

(Nunavummiut), “not just for geopolitical safety but also to keep the promises made in the name of truth and reconciliation.”<sup>48</sup>

The *Nunavut Arctic Sovereignty and Security Strategy*, which the Government of Nunavut and the NTI wrote together, reiterates why Arctic policy must be informed by a people-centred perspective, and the region understood as a homeland. The document’s foreword states that, “In this time of growing geopolitical interest in the Arctic, we must ensure that sovereignty is not only asserted—but lived, secured, and shared in full partnership with those who call this land home.”<sup>49</sup> Nation-building, it says, goes beyond physical infrastructure. “It is about building strong communities, fostering resilience, and ensuring that every project delivers lasting benefits to our people.”<sup>50</sup> The needs that must be met to realize this holistic vision, which should, in the words of Premier Main, “balance the realities of conventional security with a commitment to the people of the region,” are outlined next.<sup>51</sup>

## Closing Infrastructure Gaps

Infrastructure gaps were one of the most notable themes of the Committee’s 2019 report on the Arctic, which incorporated findings from travel to communities in Nunavut and the Northwest Territories. Yet, it was apparent during this study that there is still a significant need for investment, in all sectors. Natan Obed told the Committee that the Inuit homeland in Canada is “the least-developed Arctic territory among the eight Arctic states, despite its enormous potential for economic growth and its growing importance as a geopolitically strategic region.”<sup>52</sup> He summarized the situation by remarking that,

[w]e experience the highest cost of living in North America due to the lack of federal investment in transportation and related infrastructure, and our people are at greater risk than other Canadians and other Arctic populations of experiencing poverty and

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48 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 January 2026, 1535 (the Honourable John Main).

49 Nunavut Tunngavik Incorporated and Government of Nunavut, *Nunavut Arctic Sovereignty and Security Strategy*, August 2025.

50 Ibid.

51 FAAE, *Evidence*, 29 January 2026, 1535 (the Honourable John Main).

52 FAAE, *Evidence*, 9 October 2025, 1615 (Natan Obed).



human rights violations because of the profound gaps that exist in health, education and other essential services.<sup>53</sup>

Mr. Obed provided specific examples to elaborate. Across Inuit Nunangat, there is one deepwater port, despite the fact that these 51 communities are all “either at tidewater in a marine environment or in fresh water and adjacent to a marine environment.”<sup>54</sup> As Premier Main noted, in Nunavut, “many of the basic pieces of infrastructure, such as highways, simply don’t exist.”<sup>55</sup> There are only a couple of airports in the territory with paved airstrips.<sup>56</sup> What is needed, he said, is an expansion of infrastructure and investment at a scale that can bring the territory “in line with national standards and expectations.”<sup>57</sup>

While the situation in each territory is distinct, the Honourable R.J. Simpson, Premier of the Northwest Territories, spoke with a similar level of urgency and ambition. Sovereignty, he said, “is not something that can be declared; it needs to be built through presence, partnership and sustained investment.”<sup>58</sup> After expressing his belief that “northern voices were heard” in the development of the Government of Canada’s Arctic foreign policy,<sup>59</sup> the challenge now, he said, is turning that vision into action. To illustrate why, Premier Simpson highlighted his own examples of the infrastructure deficit in the North and drew attention to the “extraordinarily high cost of doing business in remote regions.”<sup>60</sup> He urged the Committee to understand that these limitations and inefficiencies are impeding development within the territory, but also across the Arctic. There are, he said, “no direct transportation corridors linking the western and eastern Arctic or connecting the

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53 Ibid. Mr. Obed also remarked that “Canada is the only Arctic state without a university in its Arctic territory.” In the time since this testimony was received, it was announced that the main campus of Inuit Nunangat University will be based in Arviat, Nunavut, with a planned opening in 2030. See Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, [Inuit Nunangat University Announces Main Campus Location, Major Inuit Contributions](#), News release, 11 February 2026; and Indigenous Services Canada, [Minister Gull-Masty announces new support to empower Inuit and strengthen Northern Communities](#), News release, 19 February 2026.

54 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1625 (Natan Obed).

55 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 January 2026, 1545 (the Honourable John Main).

56 Ibid., [1610](#).

57 Ibid., [1535](#).

58 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 29 January 2026, 1535 (the Honourable R.J. Simpson, Premier of the Northwest Territories, Government of Northwest Territories).

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

territories to each other in a meaningful way.” As Premier Simpson said, these “gaps weaken Canada’s economic resilience and limit its strategic reach.”<sup>61</sup>

Premier Simpson’s government has identified major infrastructure priorities, including the advancement of the Mackenzie Valley Highway. Once completed, it would connect from Wrigley, which is where the winter road system begins in the southern Northwest Territories, up to Inuvik and the Arctic Ocean. Other priorities are the development of the Arctic economic and security corridor, as well as initiatives that can reduce the cost of energy. From the territory’s perspective, these are “nation-building investments that increase affordability, enable trade, support population stability and strengthen Canada’s Arctic presence.”<sup>62</sup>

## Reinforcing Security with Prosperity

Two points were made about the linkages between infrastructure and Canada’s broader national interests, namely Canada’s economic and conventional security. First, and as with other aspects of policy implementation, the Committee was told that success will depend on the strength of partnerships. Herb Nakimayak, for example, believes that Canada can harness its critical minerals potential in the North by collaborating closely with Inuit treaty organizations and by proceeding on the basis of proper processes for consultation and environmental review.<sup>63</sup> Building a real critical minerals economy in Canada, according to Jessica Shadian, will have to be a national effort, involve coordination with like-minded states, and the identification of an entire supply chain, “from the mine to the offtake market.” The other factor she mentioned is the “need to have a guaranteed price.”<sup>64</sup> According to David Perry, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, figuring out how to transform deposits into active defence supply chains might be where Canada “can carve out a particularly value-added contribution to the NATO alliance because most of the other allies don’t have the same kinds of natural resource deposits that we do.”<sup>65</sup>

While some infrastructure investments will be specific to defence requirements, the second point is that there can be overlapping opportunities to enhance Canada’s security and the strength of its communities. For Inuit in Canada, Herb Nakimayak said,

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61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

63 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1600 (Herb Nakimayak).

64 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1555 (Jessica M. Shadian).

65 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1710 (David Perry).



“mixed or dual-use infrastructure is critically important.”<sup>66</sup> In this regard, he referenced examples such as the intent to revitalize the port of Churchill, Manitoba, alongside the government’s commitment to having a year-round military presence in the Arctic. Testimony underscored that defence is enabled by robust infrastructure and local knowledge. The CAF is trying to achieve presence and domain awareness across an immense territory. When asked what he would prioritize moving forward, Brigadier-General Daniel Rivière, Commander of Joint Task Force (North), replied: “Investments in logistics for sustainment and military mobility would be at the top of my list.”<sup>67</sup>

### Recommendation 3

**That the Government of Canada use all tools at its disposal and work closely with Indigenous, territorial, and provincial partners in the North to expand and accelerate investments in infrastructure, including for ports, transportation corridors, communications and energy systems, and critical mineral production, as well as for military facilities and logistical networks that can enhance Canada’s Arctic security.**

## Understanding the Security Landscape

### Disentangling the Threat Vectors

Canada’s security capabilities and diplomatic initiatives are being determined by policy priorities, but also by the government’s assessment of threats. To form an accurate picture, Professor Whitney Lackenbauer, Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North at Trent University, urged the Committee to disentangle threats according to whether they pose a threat *to* the Canadian Arctic or whether they represent a threat that would likely pass *through* the Arctic towards another target (e.g., a missile strike that is launched over the North American Arctic). Doing so reveals nuances with respect to the actors of greatest concern, but also the most effective forms of deterrence and response. Ensuring air and missile defence against threats that would emanate *from outside* Canada’s Arctic territory, for example, requires the modernization of NORAD and investment in domain awareness.<sup>68</sup> Whereas the most significant threats *to* the Canadian Arctic appear to be espionage, foreign interference, and predatory investments. Building societal resilience against such threats requires information-

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66 FAAE, *Evidence*, 2 October 2025, 1535 (Herb Nakimayak).

67 FAAE, *Evidence*, 7 October 2025, 1215 (Brigadier-General Daniel Rivière, Commander of Joint Task Force (North), Canadian Armed Forces).

68 FAAE, *Evidence*, 2 October 2025, 1705 (P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Professor, Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North, Trent University, As an Individual).

sharing protocols, as well as the capacity to carry out investigations and mitigation, where and when necessary.<sup>69</sup>

For the purposes of this report, these vectors can be broadly grouped according to threats that fall within the military sphere and those that are more in the realm of economic security and democratic integrity. While the former are more obvious, as they involve the air, sea and land forces of potentially adversarial states, the latter are threatening activities due to their clandestine or deceptive nature. The threat of foreign interference, for example, could involve the manipulation of public opinion or of “people who aspire to higher office.”<sup>70</sup> When it comes to economic security, threats could take the form of proxies, disinformation tactics or economic coercion used to enable investment.<sup>71</sup> Such activity could be seeking dependencies, or supply chain manipulation or control, but also access to the area, including its infrastructure.<sup>72</sup> In fact, the Committee was told that the infrastructure gaps in the Canadian Arctic and North pose an indirect risk to national security because the situation can leave vulnerable communities with no choice but to seek foreign investment.<sup>73</sup> As such, closing these gaps would help to “mitigate national security threats facing the region.”<sup>74</sup>

The distinction between these threat vectors can blur when concerns relate to dual-use activities, such those involving research vessels and surveillance platforms. For example, a research partnership could be connected to concerns about climate change in the region, which could involve the placement of sensors to collect data. In such a scenario, those sensors could be collecting information for legitimate research, but also “collecting information about other kinds of movements in the region that could be of use to the military or intelligence capacity of a foreign country.”<sup>75</sup>

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69 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2026, 1555 (Paul Lynd, Assistant Director, Canadian Security Intelligence Service).

70 Ibid., [1640](#).

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid., [1655](#).

73 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2026, 1655 (René Ouellette, Director General, Canadian Security Intelligence Service).

74 Ibid., [1710](#).

75 Ibid., [1705](#).



## Assessing the Implications for Canada

Global Affairs Canada informed the Committee that “Russia remains the most capable actor in the Arctic,”<sup>76</sup> even when accounting for the losses incurred from its war of aggression against Ukraine. Officials noted that Russia is “continuing to invest heavily in defensive and military capabilities in the Arctic, essentially going back to Cold War tactics and mentality there.”<sup>77</sup> Russia’s efforts are concentrated on reinforcing the Northern Sea Route, which is the maritime route that runs above its territory. Russia has approximately 53% of the Arctic Ocean coastline.<sup>78</sup> That said, the Committee was told that there is nothing preventing Russia from using this buildup for offensive purposes.<sup>79</sup>

Another factor to consider is the increased collaboration between Russia and China. This has included Chinese military engagement in joint maritime patrols off Alaska’s Aleutian islands, as well as an incident, in July 2024, when Russian and Chinese aircraft were detected off the U.S. air defence identification zone.<sup>80</sup> Global Affairs Canada informed the Committee that “China is very much engaged in resource extraction in the Russian north,” and it appears to be “leveraging Russia’s need for resources and for sanctions evasion as a result of the Ukraine war.”<sup>81</sup>

Longer term concerns about Arctic security are linked to forecasts of the region’s ice levels and maritime accessibility. Global Affairs Canada indicated that “more countries are turning their eyes to the Arctic as a region of opportunity to pursue their economic and geopolitical interests.”<sup>82</sup> Canada’s long-standing position is that “the Arctic should be governed by the Arctic states first and foremost, in collaboration with Arctic and northern indigenous peoples.”<sup>83</sup>

While Global Affairs Canada officials expressed concern about non-Arctic states seeking to advance their interests, the officials challenged the narrative that “the Arctic is open

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76 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1115 (Eric Laporte, Executive Director, Regional Security and Defence Relations Division, Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development).

77 Ibid.

78 Arctic Council, [“The Russian Federation,” Arctic States](#).

79 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1115 (Eric Laporte).

80 Ibid.

81 Ibid.

82 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1105 (Robert Sinclair).

83 Ibid.

and that other countries, such as China, are moving in.”<sup>84</sup> They acknowledged the need for vigilance, but not for panic. The Committee heard that the shipping season in the Canadian Arctic is still quite limited.<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, while foreign vessels do traverse Canadian Arctic waters, they have respected Canadian regulations. According to the department, when foreign vessels make such applications and demonstrate this compliance, they are recognizing Canada’s sovereignty over internal waters.<sup>86</sup> Other testimony gathered by the Committee, which is cited later on, suggests that the key is ensuring that Canada has the presence, domain awareness, and response capabilities to ensure this remains the case. There is only added impetus given that, in 2025, the U.S. President “issued an executive order on shipbuilding that also includes a tasking to the Department of Defense to secure Arctic waters without clarifying what the waters are.”<sup>87</sup>

### Framing the Regional Dynamics

Assessments of the overall security environment in the circumpolar Arctic varied. Notwithstanding the renewed global interest in the Arctic, Sheena Kennedy, Executive Director of Oceans North, believes that Canada’s approach “must underscore that diplomacy is our first line of defence.”<sup>88</sup> Her view is that “Canada should remain committed to the principles of peace, stability and rules-based international order.”<sup>89</sup> In support of this point, Dr. Kennedy noted that “Canada and its Arctic allies have always found ways to co-operate on matters of mutual interest.”<sup>90</sup> As an example of this “exceptional multilateralism” (which she also called “Arctic exceptionalism”<sup>91</sup>), she cited the precautionary agreement that was reached to regulate fishing in the central Arctic Ocean and suggested that this agreement could be built on to address transpolar shipping and deep-sea mining. All the Arctic states, she explained, managed to reach agreement on the Central Arctic Ocean Fisheries Agreement, including the U.S. and Russia.<sup>92</sup>

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84 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1230 (Robert Sinclair).

85 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1230 (Eric Laporte).

86 *Ibid.*, [1145](#).

87 *Ibid.*, [1155](#). Also see United States, The White House, [Restoring America’s Maritime Dominance](#), Executive Order, 9 April 2025.

88 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1540 (Sheena Kennedy, Executive Director, Oceans North).

89 *Ibid.*

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*, [1615](#).

92 *Ibid.*, [1610](#).



For his part, James Fergusson, Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba, highlighted the danger of viewing the world in polarized terms, particularly when it comes to great power relations. From his perspective, and with the objective of avoiding unintended conflict, he urged an approach that mixes deterrence with diplomatic interaction.<sup>93</sup> Dr. Fergusson is of the opinion that re-engaging with Russia on Arctic issues—including through the Arctic Council—would in no way legitimize Russia’s aggression against Ukraine.<sup>94</sup> He also mentioned the idea of what he called “an Arctic security forces round table,” which he suggested could be used “to develop and implement confidence and security-building measures to avoid misperceptions and potential accidents that might be perceived as threatening.”<sup>95</sup>

Other testimony suggested that a new dynamic is taking shape in the circumpolar Arctic. Professor Whitney Lackenbauer argued that, “[a]ny lingering ideas about Arctic exceptionalism and the region being inherently insulated from global geopolitical dynamics are now very out of date.”<sup>96</sup> Professor Christian Leuprecht, who is based at the Royal Military College of Canada and Queen’s University, believes that the government “needs to explain to Canadians that the Arctic is no longer a zone of perennial peace.” Rather, he said, the Arctic “is now in play as a zone of adversarial competition and rivalry.”<sup>97</sup>

Adding further complexity to this picture is the role of the United States. The government’s Arctic foreign policy identifies the U.S. as “Canada’s closest partner and ally in the Arctic.”<sup>98</sup> Yet, according to Professor Leuprecht, when it comes to the U.S., “the Arctic has always been an area of contestation, going back to at least the Alaska boundary dispute.”<sup>99</sup> He further believes that Canada now faces a stark choice. In Professor Leuprecht’s estimation, this is the result of the postures Canada and the other Western states adopted after the end of the Cold War, which essentially left international security up to the Americans for 25 years. Canada, he said, can now draw “even closer to the United States by default,” or it can invest “more in Canadian foreign policy and foreign policy instruments in the hopes of continuing to assert Canada’s

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93 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1630 (James Fergusson, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba, As an Individual).

94 Ibid.

95 Ibid.

96 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1640 (P. Whitney Lackenbauer).

97 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1650 (Christian Leuprecht, Professor, Royal Military College of Canada and Queen’s University, As an Individual).

98 Government of Canada, [Canada’s Arctic Foreign Policy](#), 2024.

99 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1645 (Christian Leuprecht).

interests as a middle power by partnering with Europe in counterbalancing the vagaries of U.S. unilateralism and global headwinds.”<sup>100</sup>

There are additional nuances to consider, particularly when taking a step back from the present moment and considering the longer arc of relationships and the factors that have shaped them. The Committee heard from Global Affairs Canada officials that, despite challenges in the Canada–U.S. relationship at the political level, cooperation in the realm of defence and security “is still very strong and active every day through NORAD, for example, and the binational command.”<sup>101</sup> The Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) similarly conveyed that, “at the intelligence department level we still work in lockstep and hand in hand with each other, and it’s in our interests to continue to do so, on both sides.”<sup>102</sup>

Some witnesses signalled that there may be opportunities to strengthen practical cooperation in these areas of shared interest as Canada makes major investments in defence. David Perry believes that the emerging strategic landscape offers “an opportunity for Canada to help our American allies enhance their defence posture at a time when the Americans are increasingly concerned about the defence of their homeland.”<sup>103</sup> Professor Lackenbauer thinks that Canada should be articulating with confidence that it is “not simply a passive recipient of American security guarantees.” Canada’s planned acquisition of such capabilities as the Arctic over-the-horizon radar and new sensor systems, he noted, will be “integral to North American defence.” By handling what is known as the “10 to 2” of the North American Arctic, Canada can enable the U.S. “to focus on the Atlantic and Pacific directions or vectors of attack to North America.”<sup>104</sup> Investments in Canada’s Arctic security could, according to Dr. Perry, therefore help to “construct the new defence relationship with our American allies that the Prime Minister has stated is needed.”<sup>105</sup>

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100 Ibid.

101 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1220 (Eric Laporte).

102 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2026, 1605 (Paul Lynd).

103 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1635 (David Perry).

104 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1715 (P. Whitney Lackenbauer).

105 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1635 (David Perry).



## Investing in Capabilities

### Bolstering Canada's Defence

Canada is grappling with an international strategic environment that is in a state of flux. Nevertheless, testimony largely indicated that, as things stand, the central issue for Canada in the Arctic is not a direct challenge to its sovereignty, which has long been established,<sup>106</sup> but the need for investments in the capacity to assert that sovereignty, on a consistent and continual basis. According to Dr. Perry, the “key issue is whether or not we can enforce what we want to happen in the place that we call our own.”<sup>107</sup> Or, as Professor Leuprecht put it, the measurement that matters is “Canada’s ability and capability to shape the environment rather than simply having to react to it.”<sup>108</sup> Given the military modernization programs that Russia and China have undertaken over the last 15 to 20 years, Dr. Fergusson believes that Canada’s current plan is not enough. His view is that Canada requires advanced capabilities “to signal to our potential adversaries, potential competitors and potential co-operatives that we are able to defend ourselves and can deter, credibly, any threats to our territory and sovereign rights.”<sup>109</sup>

Dr. Perry called on the Government of Canada to fully fund all the defence initiatives that have been announced, “as well as whatever requirements are identified as needed to give the Canadian Coast Guard a meaningful national security role, particularly when it comes to maritime domain awareness.”<sup>110</sup> (The Coast Guard was integrated into the Department of National Defence in 2025, but remains a civilian Special Operating Agency.<sup>111</sup>) Furthermore, and learning from past delays and failures to deliver promised acquisitions, Dr. Perry believes that the Government of Canada as a whole “needs to focus on the implementation of these initiatives.”<sup>112</sup> In this regard, he referenced the 2008 *Canada First Defence Strategy*, which committed to the purchase of new fighter aircraft, new warships and new maritime surveillance aircraft. Despite the passage of

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106 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1645 (James Fergusson); and FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, [1640](#) and [1705](#) (P. Whitney Lackenbauer).

107 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1650 (David Perry).

108 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1645 (Christian Leuprecht).

109 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1715 (James Fergusson)

110 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1635 (David Perry).

111 National Defence, [National Defence Welcomes the Canadian Coast Guard to the Defence Team](#), News release, 2 September 2025.

112 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 23 October 2025, 1635 (David Perry).

17 years, Dr. Perry observed, “not a single airplane or ship has yet been delivered to the Canadian military.”<sup>113</sup>

#### **Recommendation 4**

**That the Government of Canada accelerate the pace of its investment in the modernization of NORAD and fully fund all requirements related to Arctic security, while ensuring that it has the systems and decision-making authorities in place to enable the timely acquisition and deployment of the capabilities, technologies and infrastructure necessary for the all-domain defence of the Canadian Arctic.**

#### **Recommendation 5**

**That the Government of Canada increase the permanent presence of the Canadian Armed Forces across the Canadian Arctic and North, including the construction of new military bases, strengthening support for the Canadian Rangers, and upgrading forward operating locations to host fighter aircraft.**

### **Protecting Canada's Sovereignty**

In his evaluation of threats to the Canadian Arctic, Professor Lackenbauer remarked that he is “not worried about an invasion of land forces on northern Ellesmere.”<sup>114</sup> What does concern him, however, is “a whole bunch of interference activities and other ways that nefarious foreign actors may seek to influence or undermine Canadians’ abilities, including northern rights holders’ abilities, to influence and chart our desired future direction.”<sup>115</sup> Consequently, he believes that investments in Canada’s security agencies “are absolutely essential,” as is cooperation between those agencies and Canada’s defence architecture.<sup>116</sup> When it comes to these types of threats, Professor Lackenbauer also referenced NATO’s seven baseline requirements for national resilience, which he said can help the Canadian government determine how it can make “smart, strategic investments with that 1.5% of GDP” (i.e., with the second part of the NATO defence investment obligation).<sup>117</sup>

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113 Ibid.

114 FAAE, *Evidence*, 2 October 2025, 1705 (P. Whitney Lackenbauer).

115 Ibid.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.



Indeed, CSIS conveyed that its “primary concern” in the Canadian Arctic now relates to economic security.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the agency indicated that China is “a primary threat” from a CSIS perspective.<sup>119</sup> To fulfill its national security mandate, one of the most important tools at the agency’s disposal, which was enabled by recent legislative changes,<sup>120</sup> is the ability to share information on the threat landscape with territorial and Indigenous governments and partner organizations across the Canadian North. These briefings aim to provide “relevant national security insights so these can be considered as part of decision-making processes.”<sup>121</sup> Through these contacts and relationships, “valuable threat-related information” is also being shared proactively with CSIS.<sup>122</sup> Another important tool supporting informed decision-making is the *Investment Canada Act*, which authorizes the federal government to review any foreign investment—regardless of value, sector, or whether control is acquired—on national security grounds. Nevertheless, the agency recognizes that hostile state actors may seek to structure transactions in ways that circumvent the Act’s notification thresholds and thereby avoid triggering a security review.<sup>123</sup>

Testimony indicated that CSIS generally has the tools it needs, but that its capacity to use those tools has not been fully realized. The Canadian Arctic is vast, and while the agency now regularly sends employees to engage with partners, there are “absolutely” challenges.<sup>124</sup> These include the cost of travel and the lack of a permanent agency presence in the Arctic. Ideally, CSIS “would have offices in the Arctic, in the territorial capitals,” as is the case for every province except for Prince Edward Island.<sup>125</sup> At present, the agency has not been given “specific funding related to ramping up resources in the north.”<sup>126</sup>

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118 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 12 February 2026, 1610 (Paul Lynd).

119 Ibid., [1620](#). In response to other questions about the state actors of primary concern in the Arctic, Mr. Lynd included Russia, but he noted that “the concern about Russia is from more of a military perspective than an economic one.” See Ibid., [1635](#) and [1650](#).

120 Ibid., [1605](#).

121 Ibid., [1555](#).

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid., [1625](#).

124 Ibid., [1650](#).

125 Ibid., [1700](#).

126 Ibid., [1705](#).

## Recommendation 6

**That the Government of Canada provide funding to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to ensure it has a permanent presence in the North and can fulfill its mandate in relation to Canada's Arctic security.**

### Strengthening Canada's Diplomatic Networks

To achieve Canada's objectives in relation to the governance of the Arctic region, testimony underscored the importance of diplomatic engagement. In addition to new consulates in Greenland and Anchorage, and a new position that was created within one of Canada's Nordic embassies, Canada is promoting a security dialogue with the "Arctic Seven" (A7) foreign ministers—Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, and the United States—"to mirror" discussions that happen through security and defence institutions.<sup>127</sup> In 2025, Canada was also invited to join the discussions of the "Nordic 5" in Helsinki.<sup>128</sup> One departmental official characterized Canada's approach to regional diplomacy by invoking the metaphor of a layered onion. That is, "working most closely with our closest allies—the U.S. and the Nordics—and then working outward from that with the [European Union], the [United Kingdom], Japan and the Republic of Korea to join the north Pacific to the Arctic."<sup>129</sup> The Committee's study underscored that the opportunities for collaboration on security issues have only expanded with the accession of Finland and Sweden into NATO, which has been one of the factors shifting the Alliance's gaze northwards.

## Recommendation 7

**That the Government of Canada deepen and formalize its mechanisms for dialogue, information-sharing and other forms of diplomatic, security and defence cooperation with its liked-minded Arctic Allies to enable coordinated responses to geopolitical shifts, climate driven challenges, and regional security concerns.**

One of the objectives of Canada's Arctic foreign policy is to demonstrate regional leadership. Canada's approach, as outlined by Global Affairs Canada, is anchored by the position that the Arctic states should "continue to lead a well-governed, rules-based

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127 FAAE, *Evidence*, 7 October 2025, 1150 (Robert Sinclair).

128 Global Affairs Canada, *Minister Anand to travel to Finland to advance Nordic partnerships and Arctic cooperation*, News release, 18 August 2025.

129 FAAE, *Evidence*, 7 October 2025, 1235 (Robert Sinclair).



region.”<sup>130</sup> It is “pivotal,” according to Herb Nakimayak, that Canada maintain its commitments to “multilateralism, diplomacy and good governance in support of a safe and governed Arctic.”<sup>131</sup> Canada has been a strong supporter of the Arctic Council since its inception in 1996, whose work continues at the scientific and technical levels.<sup>132</sup> Canada intends to increase its financial contributions to the Arctic Council<sup>133</sup> and has been playing a “leading role” with respect to the engagement of Indigenous Peoples in the forum’s work.<sup>134</sup> At the same time, the Committee was reminded that inclusive diplomacy is not limited to the Arctic Council. In addition to its permanent participation in the Arctic Council, for example, the Inuit Circumpolar Council—whose Canadian chapter is led by Mr. Nakimayak—has permanent consultative status at the International Maritime Organization, “among many other fora.”<sup>135</sup>

Jessica Shadian recognized that support for the work of the Arctic Council is a “fundamental” part of Canadian foreign policy, while highlighting the need for additional tools to reckon with “today’s serious geopolitical realities.”<sup>136</sup> She drew attention to other forms of engagement, noting that Canada’s “Arctic neighbours support their Arctic think tanks, using them as levers to promote their Arctic policy interests on the world stage and to conduct track 1.5 [i.e., less formal] diplomacy offstage.”<sup>137</sup> This more expansive approach, she suggested, will require programming that goes beyond the existing allocations under the department’s Global Arctic Leadership Initiative.<sup>138</sup> Finally, Ms. Shadian urged an Arctic science policy that is “fit for purpose, not only to study climate change but also to do applied research to address it, namely cold-weather innovations spanning everything from NORAD to housing—for Canada and for export.”<sup>139</sup>

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130 Ibid., [1105](#).

131 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1535 (Herb Nakimayak).

132 The Arctic Council’s [mandate](#) explicitly excludes military security. The forum has no programming budget of its own and has no remit to enforce its guidelines. Those responsibilities fall to states.

133 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 7 October 2025, 1105 (Robert Sinclair).

134 Ibid., [1300](#).

135 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1535 (Herb Nakimayak).

136 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1530 (Jessica M. Shadian).

137 Ibid., [1535](#).

138 Ibid. For additional information on existing programming, see Global Affairs Canada, Evaluation Division and Office of the Chief Audit Executive and Special Investigations, [Evaluation and Audit of the Global Arctic Leadership Initiative, 2020–21 to 2023–24](#), May 2025.

139 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 9 October 2025, 1540 (Jessica M. Shadian).

## Recommendation 8

**That the Government of Canada position itself to play a leading multilateral role in the Arctic, including through the work of the Arctic Council and other relevant scientific, research, environmental and maritime governance bodies, and that it continue to support the representation and participation of Indigenous Peoples' organizations and governments in the work of these bodies, and ensure that it has the diplomatic and scientific capacity necessary to realize this leadership objective.**

## CONCLUSION

### Staying Nimble and Acting with Urgency

When the Committee decided to undertake this study, in September 2025, the geopolitical environment in the circumpolar Arctic was already dynamic. However, in the months since, there have been developments that could affect Canada's Arctic foreign policy. After President Trump repeatedly stated that the U.S. would need to acquire Greenland to ensure its national security against threats from Russia and China, Canada and European states issued statements in support of the Kingdom of Denmark's sovereignty and territorial integrity.<sup>140</sup>

To address concerns within the Alliance about Arctic security, on 11 February 2026, NATO launched a new multidomain military activity that will be known as "Arctic Sentry." Its purpose is to provide "NATO planners with full visibility of Allies' national activities across the region, allowing NATO to consolidate these actions into one coherent, overarching operational approach."<sup>141</sup> Arctic Sentry will be led by Joint Force Command Norfolk, the Alliance's operational headquarters in North America (Virginia), whose area of responsibility was modified in December 2025 in order to include Denmark, Finland and Sweden along with Iceland, Norway, and the United Kingdom, in addition to the Atlantic. To carry out Arctic Sentry, Joint Force Command Norfolk will collaborate with other Allied

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140 Paul Waldie, "[Trump drops tariff threats against allies opposed to U.S. control of Greenland](#)," *The Globe and Mail*, 21 January 2026; Prime Minister of Canada, [Prime Minister Carney meets with Prime Minister of Denmark Mette Frederiksen](#), 6 January 2026; France, La Maison Élysée, [Joint Statement on Greenland](#), 6 January 2026; and Sweden, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, [Joint statement by the Nordic Foreign Ministers on Greenland](#), 6 January 2026.

141 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), [Arctic security](#), 16 February 2026.



commands and coordinate activities with NORAD,<sup>142</sup> as well as with U.S. Northern Command and U.S. European Command.<sup>143</sup> Minister Anand has already indicated that Canada wants this new NATO mission to become permanent and that Canada wants to “make sure that we have that strength on a continuous basis in the Arctic.”<sup>144</sup>

Even as the geopolitical environment shifts, necessitating adaptation, the Committee was also reminded of the importance of enduring policy anchors. Professor Leuprecht described Canada’s Arctic foreign policy as “robust and timely,” but he lamented the country’s tendency to “build policy backward.” In his view, specific policies should flow from a national security strategy. Without one, he remarked, “there is no shared understanding, no unity of purpose and effort, and no coherence within and across government and its departments.”<sup>145</sup>

The Committee is aware that the Government of Canada is preparing a national security strategy, which will reportedly inform a foreign policy review.<sup>146</sup> Furthermore, Minister Anand told the Committee that she has already directed her department to prepare an updated Indo-Pacific strategy to take into account the degree to which the world, and Canadian foreign policy priorities, have evolved since its release in 2022.<sup>147</sup> In addition to underlining the importance of policy coherence, this study also left the Committee with a sense of urgency regarding policy implementation. Testimony confirmed that the Government of Canada and its partners in the Canadian Arctic undertook the process necessary to build a shared vision for the region. Taking that and recent defence policy announcements forward, the Committee concludes this study mindful of Professor

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142 The North American Arctic is covered by the U.S. Northern Command and the Canadian Joint Operations Command, and, binationally, by the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). See Senate, Standing Committee on National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs, *Evidence*, 6 February 2023 (David Angell, Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Joint Delegation of Canada to NATO). The area of responsibility of NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) covers European territory. Regardless of these operational structures, NATO’s Article 5 collective security guarantee covers North America. See FAAE, *Evidence*, 7 October 2025, 1120 (Eric Laporte).

143 NATO, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe, *Arctic Sentry to Enhance NATO’s Presence in the Arctic and the High North*, News release, 11 February 2026.

144 Steven Chase, “Canada wants NATO’s new Arctic Sentry security mission to become permanent, Anand says,” *The Globe and Mail*, 11 February 2026.

145 FAAE, *Evidence*, 2 October 2025, 1645 (Christian Leuprecht).

146 The Canadian Press, “Union questions why Global Affairs issuing layoff warnings before policy review,” *CTV News*, 28 January 2026.

147 FAAE, *Evidence*, 30 October 2025, 1610 (the Honourable Anita Anand, Minister of Foreign Affairs).

Leuprecht's warning that Canada should not assume it still has "five or 10 years to build out greater Canadian sovereignty."<sup>148</sup> The moment to act is, therefore, now.

### **Recommendation 9**

**That, in light of the shifting geopolitical environment, the Government of Canada commit to a thorough and timely review of its Arctic foreign policy.**

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148 FAAE, [Evidence](#), 2 October 2025, 1720 (Christian Leuprecht).



## APPENDIX A: LIST OF WITNESSES

The following table lists the witnesses who appeared before the committee at its meetings related to this report. Transcripts of all public meetings related to this report are available on the committee’s [webpage for this study](#).

Organizations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>Dr. P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Professor, Canada Research Chair in the Study of the Canadian North, Trent University</p> <p>Dr. Christian Leuprecht, Professor, Royal Military College of Canada and Queen's University</p>	2025/10/02	4
<p><b>Inuit Circumpolar Council (Canada)</b></p> <p>Herb Nakimayak, President</p>	2025/10/02	4
<p><b>Oceans North</b></p> <p>Dr. Sheena Kennedy, Executive Director</p>	2025/10/02	4
<p><b>Canadian Armed Forces</b></p> <p>BGen Daniel Rivière, Commander of Joint Task Force (North)</p>	2025/10/07	5
<p><b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b></p> <p>Eric Laporte, Executive Director, Regional Security and Defence Relations Division</p> <p>Robert Sinclair, Director General, Arctic, Eurasian and European Affairs</p>	2025/10/07	5
<p><b>Arctic360</b></p> <p>Dr. Jessica M. Shadian, President and Chief Executive Officer</p>	2025/10/09	6
<p><b>Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami</b></p> <p>Natan Obed, President</p>	2025/10/09	6
<p><b>As an individual</b></p> <p>James Fergusson, Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Defence and Security Studies, University of Manitoba</p>	2025/10/23	8

<b>Organizations and Individuals</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Meeting</b>
<b>Canadian Global Affairs Institute</b> David Perry, President and Chief Executive Officer	2025/10/23	8
<b>Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development</b> Virginia Mearns, Arctic Ambassador Robert Sinclair, Director General, Arctic, Eurasian and European Affairs	2025/10/23	8
<b>Government of Northwest Territories</b> Hon. R.J. Simpson, Premier of the Northwest Territories	2026/01/29	19
<b>Government of Nunavut</b> Hon. John Main, Premier of Nunavut	2026/01/29	19
<b>Canadian Security Intelligence Service</b> Paul Lynd, Assistant Director René Ouellette, Director General	2026/02/12	22

## REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant *Minutes of Proceedings* ([Meetings Nos. 4, 5, 6, 8, 19, 22, 28](#)) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Hon. Ahmed Hussen, P.C., M.P.  
Chair

